THE END
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JIM STARLIN
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THE END

MARVEL

PREVIOUSLY...

THANOS

AKHENATEN

ETERNITY

LIVING TRIBUNAL

THOR

Earth had been claimed and conquered by the resurrected Pharaoh Akhenaten, utilizing the seemingly infinite might of the Heart of the Universe. Most of the planet's paranormal defenders died in the conflict.

But Thanos of Titan managed to seize control of the Heart and became master of--and one with--everything in the universe.

Traveling back in time, he then eradicated any trace of Akhenaten's and his masters'--The Celestial Order's--existence.

In doing so, all that had fallen--the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, the Defenders, Captain Marvel and others--were resurrected from deaths that, in effect, never occurred.

But now, our reality must deal with an all-powerful Mad Titan...

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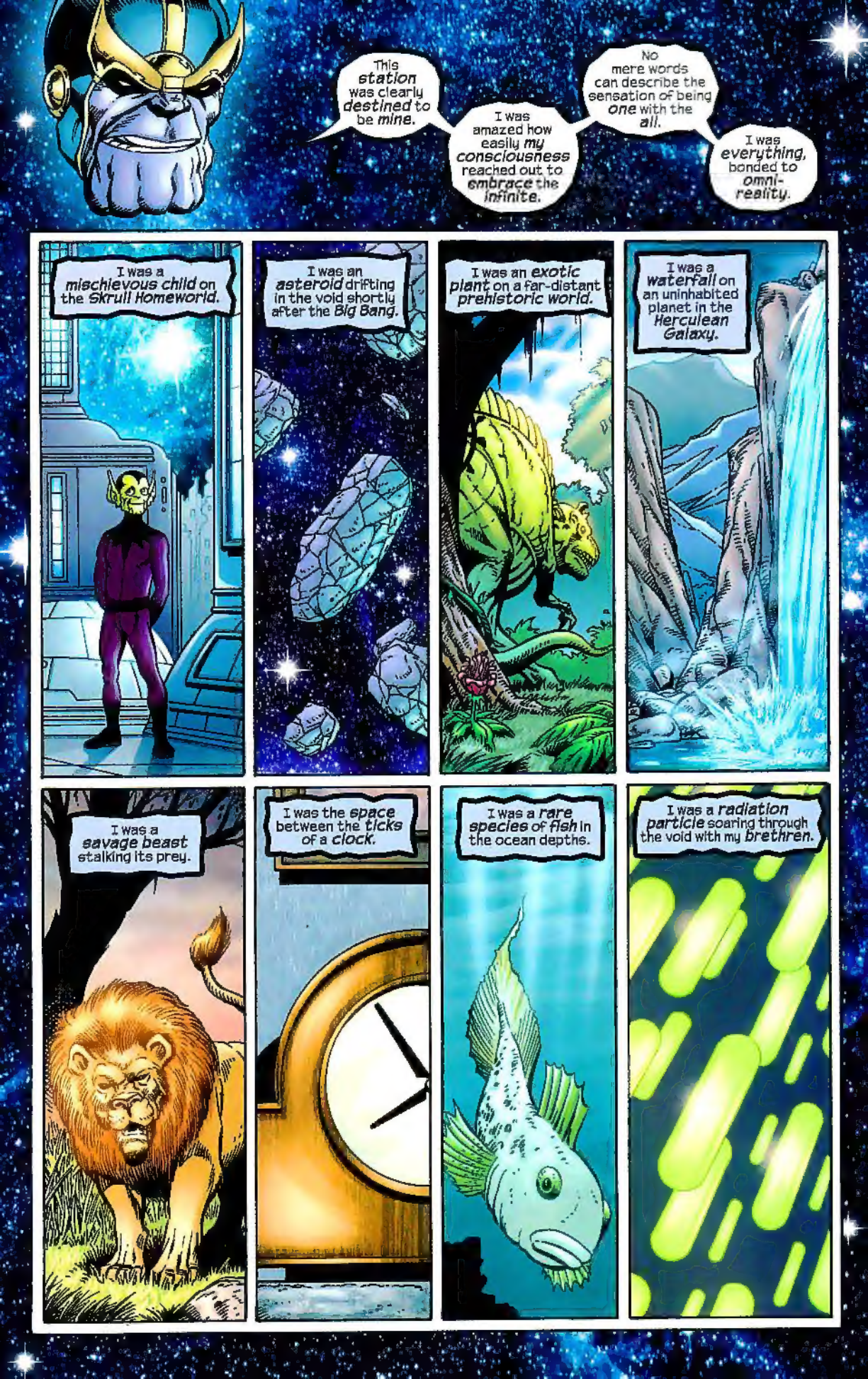
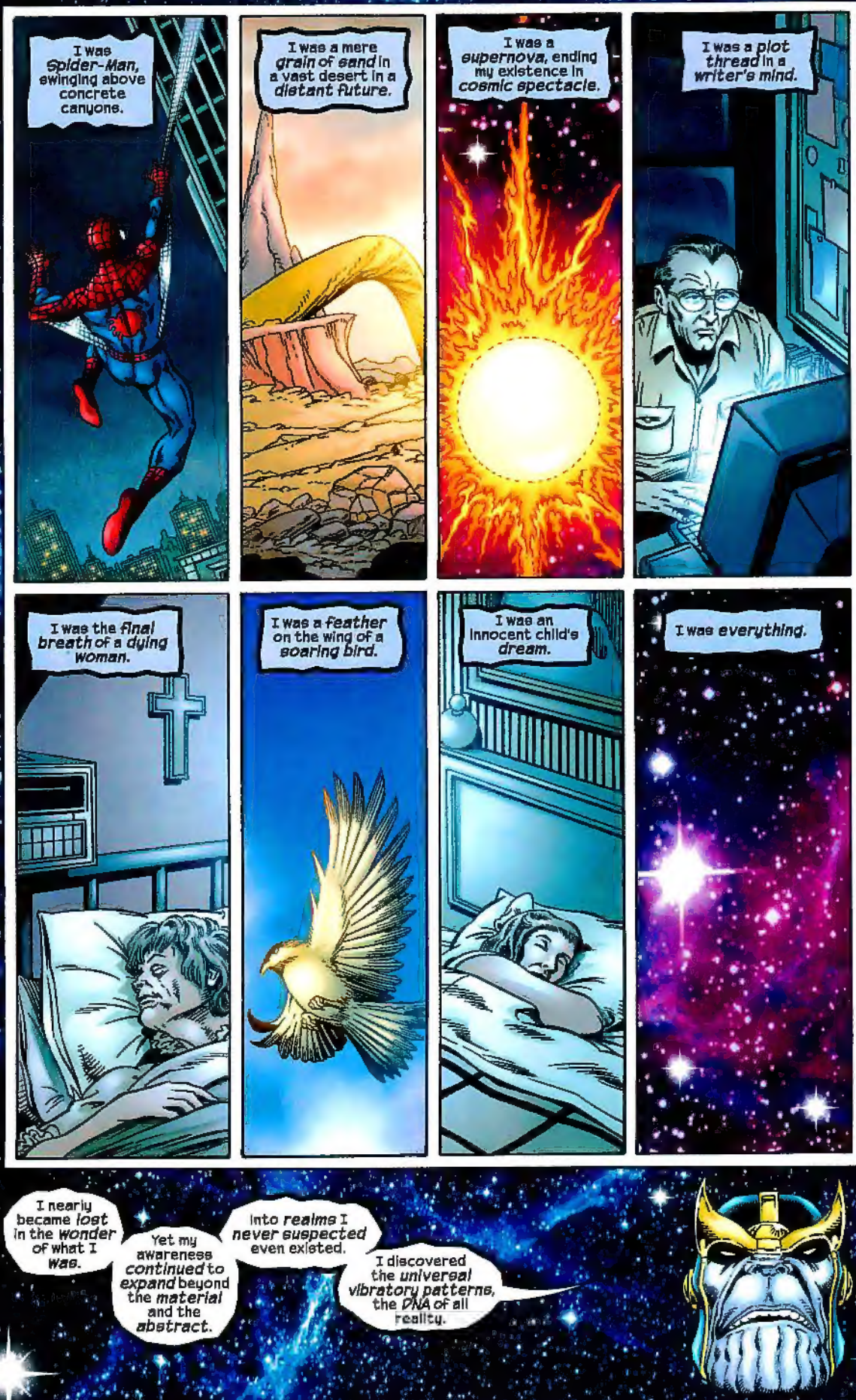
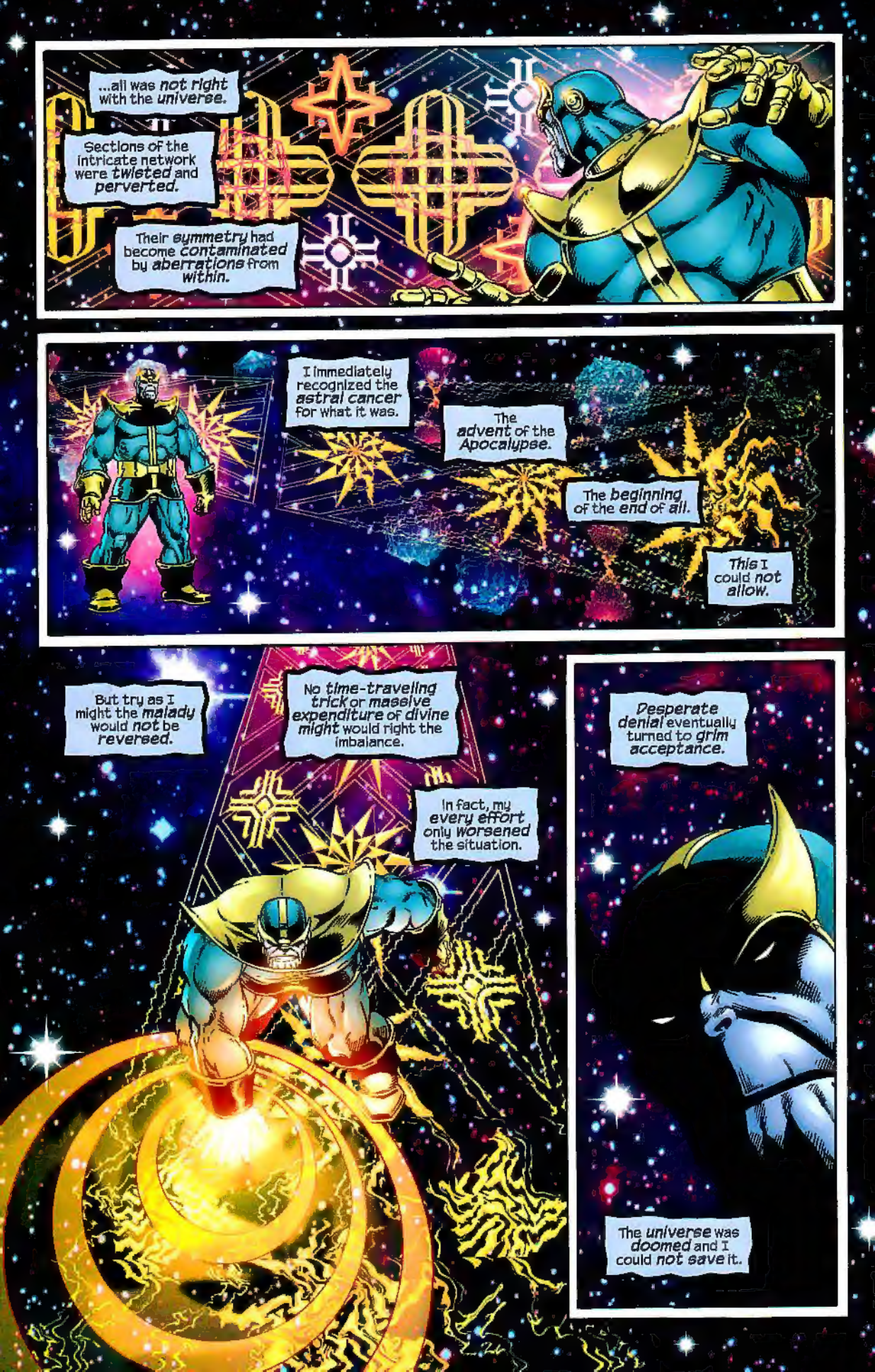
OMNIPOTENCE
I had plunged into the Heart of the Universe and challenged the Almighty for dominance of existence.
Victory was mine, but not because I triumphed in any contest of wills.
But because there was no one to challenge me.
All the theologians were wrong about divine guidance and heavenly judgment.
Supreme power was nothing more than limitless energy, awaiting the first claimant to come along to wield it.
There never had been any All-Father, celestial Supreme Will or Almighty Self.

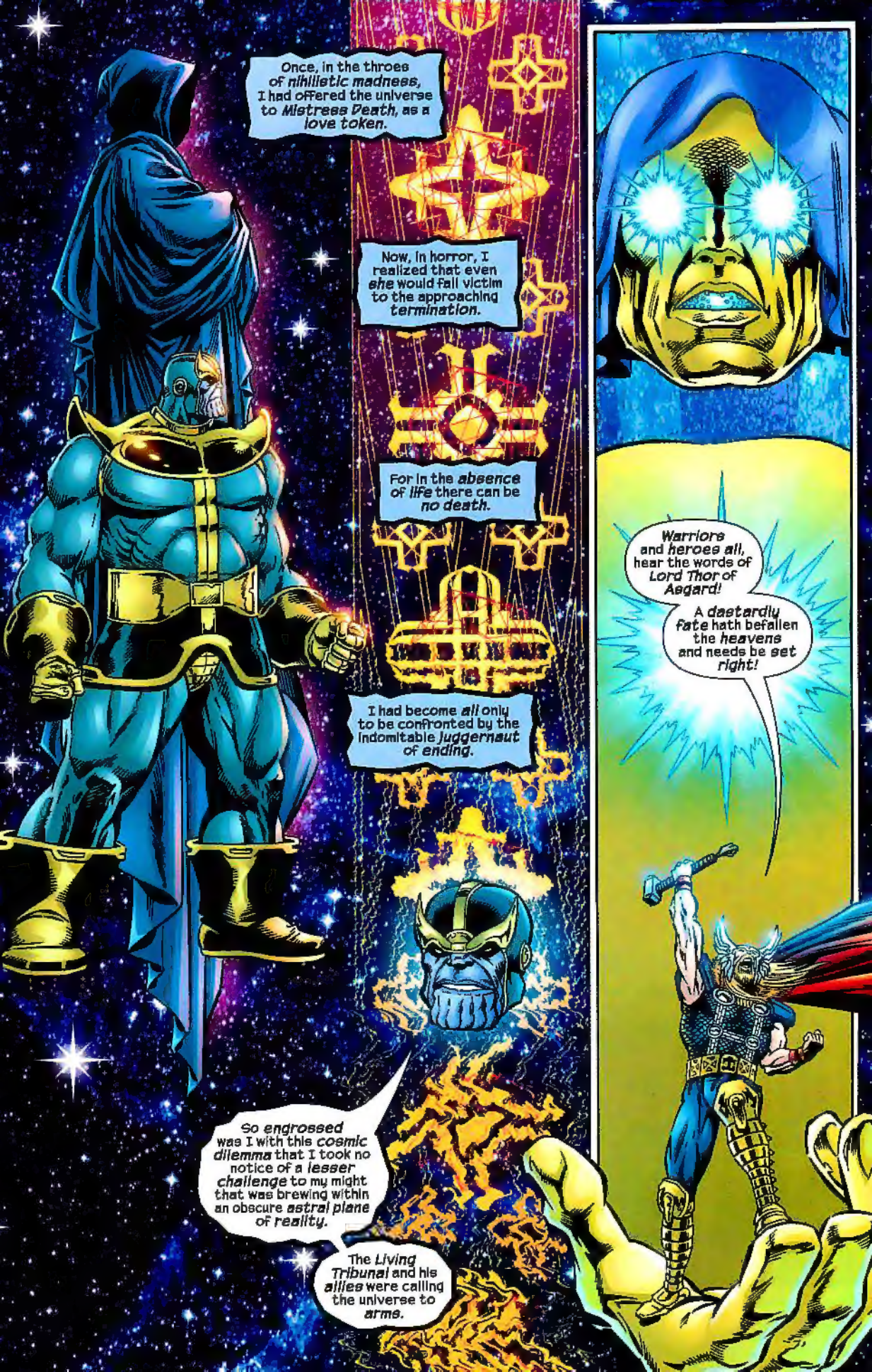
That cosmic equation was now changed and I reveled in my newfound supremacy.
With the Cosmic Cube I had manipulated facets of the divine, a very limited experience.
The Infinity Gauntlet had granted me mastery of all time, space, power, reality, the mind and the soul, but it was still external control.
Now I was all that was and subservient to none.
Supreme!
The universe finally had a master worthy and appreciative of the celestial entitlement.


This station was clearly destined to be mine.
I was amazed how easily my consciousness reached out to embrace the infinite.
No mere words can describe the sensation of being one with the all.
I was everything, bonded to omni-reality.
I was a mischievous child on the Skrull Homeworld.
I was an asteroid drifting in the void shortly after the Big Bang.
I was an exotic plant on a far-distant prehistoric world.
I was a waterfall on an uninhabited planet in the Herculean Galaxy.
I was a savage beast stalking its prey.
I was the space between the ticks of a clock.
I was a rare species of fish in the ocean depths.
I was a radiation particle soaring through the void with my brethren.


I was Spider-Man, swinging above concrete canyons.
I was a mere grain of sand in a vast desert in a distant future.
I was a supernova, ending my existence in cosmic spectacle.
I was a plot thread in a writer's mind.
I was the final breath of a dying woman.
I was a feather on the wing of a soaring bird.
I was an innocent child's dream.
I was everything.
I nearly became lost in the wonder of what I was.
Yet my awareness continued to expand beyond the material and the abstract.
Into realms I never suspected even existed.
I discovered the universal vibratory patterns, the DNA of all reality.

These glowing designs were far beyond both infrared and ultraviolet illuminations.
They were the ephemeral threads that made up our actuality, kept it whole and consistent.
Heavenly laws written in the ether.
Only then did I realize that all my struggles and sacrifice had been for naught.
My dreams were but a dark cosmic joke.
It took mere microseconds for me to comprehend the patterns' purpose and importance.
These luminous weaves were the order that holds off chaos and the void.
But upon closer inspection I realized that...


...all was not right with the universe.
Sections of the intricate network were twisted and perverted.
Their symmetry had become contaminated by aberrations from within.
I immediately recognized the astral cancer for what it was.
The advent of the Apocalypse.
The beginning of the end of all.
This I could not allow.
But try as I might the malady would not be reversed.
No time-traveling trick or massive expenditure of divine might would right the imbalance.
In fact, my every effort only worsened the situation.
Desperate denial eventually turned to grim acceptance.
The universe was doomed and I could not save it.


Once, in the throes of nihilistic madness, I had offered the universe to Mistress Death, as a love token.
Now, in horror, I realized that even she would fall victim to the approaching termination.
For in the absence of life there can be no death.
I had become all only to be confronted by the indomitable Juggernaut of ending.
So engrossed was I with this cosmic dilemma that I took no notice of a lesser challenge to my might that was brewing within an obscure astral plane of reality.
The Living Tribunal and his allies were calling the universe to arms.
Warriors and heroes all, hear the words of Lord Thor of Asgard!
A dastardly fate hath befallen the heavens and needs be set right!

Nefarious Thanos of Titan has usurped the power supreme and now reigns over all reality!
This madness cannot be allowed to go unchallenged!
I call upon you to join us in our noble struggle!
Accept this charge and be transported to the field of battle!
The big guy's at it again, huh?

Unaware that the universe was rallying against me, I continued to struggle with an existence that was disintegrating all about me.
Again and again I ventured into the past, examining the origins of this malady in the hope of finding a cure.
The trouble sprang from the fact that every element of actuality was balanced against an opposing aspect, thus maintaining a smooth astral flow.
So it always was and should have continued to be.
But it all fell to ruin the day Simon Williams became Wonder Man.

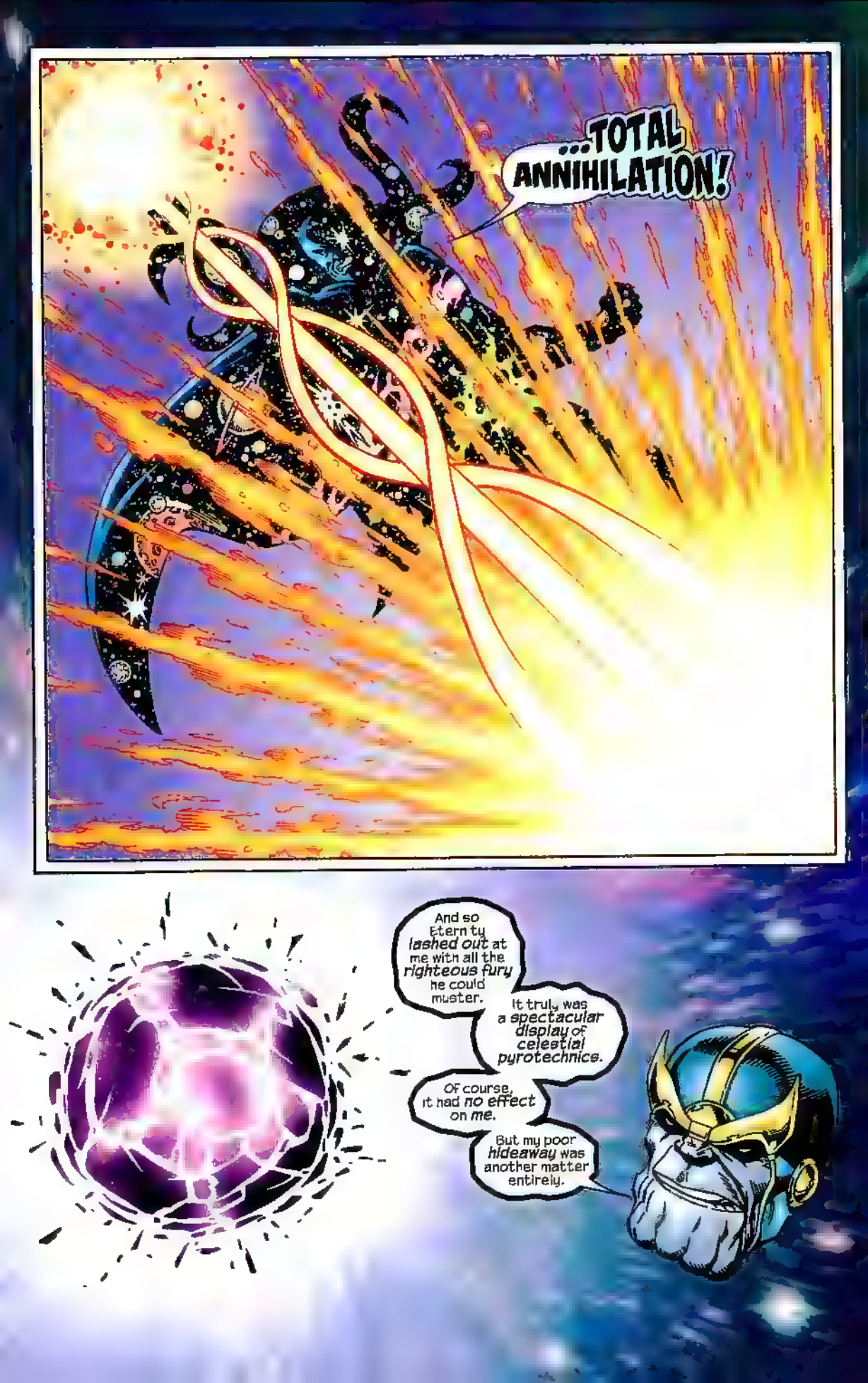
He gained his powers from a Baron Zemo, leader of the Masters of Evil, once the Avengers' deadliest adversaries.
Envy and pride drove Williams to their ranks.
His better nature eventually convinced him to betray the Masters.
This valiant deed was rewarded with death.
A demise seemingly of no importance, except to those immediately involved.
But years later, this warrior was resurrected through means that were never quite clear.
Some credit the revival to scheming Ultron, others to a mystic called the Black Talon.
But in truth it was a mysterious cosmic force that brought Wonder Man back to life, not once but twice.

This force sought to balance the light against the gathering darkness.
In recent years, the ranks of so-called evil grew so strong that certain heroes were called back from beyond the veil and pressed again into service.
Some recycled more often than others.
But in righting the good/evil balance, the more central equilibrium between life and death was set aschew.
And like falling dominos, the contamination spread throughout the vibratory patterns until reversing the damage became impossible.
Impossible for even he for whom nothing is supposed to be impossible.

So overwhelmed was I by this unforeseen turn of events that I sought out a familiar sanctuary in which to gather my thoughts...
...and plan my next move.
For these revelations had shown me the error of certain assumptions on my part.
Foremost was the conclusion that the previous Almighty had been nothing but mindless energy.
In its illumination I perceived reality's sole hope for salvation.
The cure lay in starting over from scratch.
I was the perfect candidate to be the destroyer of the universe.
Had not my entire life been dedicated to destruction?
I now clearly saw the oblique nature of the trap I had blundered into.
What better way to handle a cosmic dilemma than to pass off the responsibility of dealing with it to an unsuspecting fool?
A megalomaniacal fool with delusions of grandeur.
And as I sat there, the light dawned on me.

But the rebuilding afterwards?
What madness had the Almighty, choosing me for such a task?
Surely He must have realized I would never pay the cost such a project would demand.
But my reverie on this conundrum was destined to be cut short by the arrival of an angry petitioner.
Greetings, Usurper.
I come to demand you relinquish the supreme power you have stolen!
More like it was given to me.
Liar!
You actually have no clue as to what truly transpires, do you?

Your Lord and Master has abandoned you, Eternity, to a dismal fate.
Before you sits your only hope for survival.
The acquisition of omnipotence has obviously driven you madder than you already were, Titan.
Surrender the Power!
And give it to you, to only make an impossible situation worse?
I think not.
Do you truly believe the universe will allow you to rule it, Titan?
I think not.
Indeed?
Surely, Eternity, you must sense that everything the Almighty Was I now am.
Did you ever dare demand anything from Him?
No, but...
And I, like He was, am now the author of all that will be.
My will is supreme.
I will not demand worship, as my predecessor expected.
But I do anticipate respect, Eternity.
Demand naught from me!
Arrogant little demigod, you would preposterously lay claim to a station far beyond your merit.
Such blasphemy can only be answered with...


...TOTAL ANNIHILATION!
And so Eternity lashed out at me with all the righteous fury he could muster.
It truly was a spectacular display of celestial pyrotechnics.
Of course, it had no effect on me.
But my poor hideaway was another matter entirely.

So ends the insanity.
Hardly
And I was quite fond of that planet you just destroyed.
No!
Yes.
For the personification of all time, Eternity, you really are an annoying little cretin.
Be gone.
But the distraction would not end so easily.
So now we hear from the top of the food chain, do we?
YOU HAVE BEEN JUDGED, TITAN!

And found unworthy!
Surrender your power!
And if I refuse?
It will be taken by force!
Then do your worst.
The Living Tribunal wasted no time with idle banter.
The atmosphere that suddenly surrounded me made clear his strategy.

I was to be overpowered by the element of surprise...

...and sheer numbers.
It was really quite pathetic.

But still enough to enrage me.
This is how you would treat your Lord Almighty?
You would challenge the heavens so brazenly?!
So be it then!
Let there be war!
TO BE CONTINUED...